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AUTHOR Libbee, Kristin Sheridan; Libbee, Michael
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AVAILABLE FROM Michael Libbee, Department of Geography, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma 73069 (free)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to speculate about the relationship between societal change as presented by the women's movement, geography, and trends in education. Its thesis is that by looking at geographic teaching as an institutional response to a social revolution, a model for educational change can be developed on a much larger scale. Three approaches are presented for integrating awareness of women's issues with effective geography instruction. A basic approach is discussed which involves elimination of sexist behaviors and texts from the classroom. A checklist for avoiding sexist behavior and sexism in curriculum development accompanies this discussion. Changing course content to include supplementary information on women is described as a second approach. Although there is a dearth of published material about women, course content can be adapted to include issues such as economic trends or migration patterns among women. A third approach involves a new perspective on learning with focus on student inquiry and research. The authors include a brainstorming outline and resultant course description which they developed for a college-level course called "Geographic Perspectives on Women." According to their own particular interests, students individually identify patterns, institutions, and characteristics of women. Then as a group they establish research topics involving techniques such as regionalization or investigation of complex causality through case studies. Students receive feedback on individual projects and reports from the instructor to complete the learning process. (Author/AV)

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"Geography, Education and The Women's Movement; Speculations about Their Interrelationships."

Kristin Sheridan Libbee
Michael Libbee

SO 010 113

Education has learned a few hard lessons in the past few years. One of them has been that overtly or covertly, intentionally or not, Education has been teaching its students some lessons they're going to have to unlearn. The very institution that was designed to pass on and promote the espoused values in our society has also helped to institutionalize some of its less admirable values in practice, including racism and sexism. It has done so at least partly because it is an institution, and its major function has been to teach what was and what is - not what might be, or could be, or ought to be, and certainly not how to change things.

But society is changing - not fast enough for some, but quickly enough that both individuals and institutions are hard put to keep apace. It is likely to keep changing, and education is going to have to change with it. It is doing so now, by bits and pieces. Textbooks have all colors of people in them now. In those same books girls climb trees and run experiments, too. Ethnic studies and women's studies are gaining respectability. Evidence of the changes in both society and education is all around us here.

The purpose of this paper is to speculate about the relationship between societal change (as presented by the Women's Movement), geography, and trends in education. Its thesis is that by looking at geographic teaching as an institutional response to a social revolution we can find a model for educational change on a much larger scale. Three levels of relationships are charted in Figure 1 and form the basis for this paper.

Eliminating Sexist Behavior

Suppose, for example, that a geography instructor wanted to respond to her or his raised consciousness about women. The most basic change

Figure 1

Geography, Education and The Women's Movement:

Speculations on Their Interrelationships

	Eliminating Sexist Behavior	Change in Course Content	A New Perspective
The Women's Movement	Eliminate overt sexism in instructor behavior	Legitimize the study of women and women's issues	Discover or generate new information about women and women's issues View old information from a new perspective Explore the unique potential of the study of women. Learning to learn about women is learning to learn about society
Geography	Requires no change; geography as a body of knowledge	Supplement traditional course content with information about women or Use women as data to study geography (i.e. "the geography of women")	Geography is a group of methods for analyzing data Use of geography to study women (i.e. "geographical perspectives on women") and geographic problem solving to investigate issues important to women
Education	Requires no change; traditional or innovative methods may be used	Requires no change; emphasis on conveying a body of knowledge (or the "product" of learning)	Emphasis on developing thinking skills, development of a "spatial point of view" Learning how to learn Emphasis on process, not product

that he or she could make would be to eliminate sexist behaviors and texts from the classroom, so far as that is possible. She or he might refer to a checklist of sexist behaviors such as the one here (Figure 2). Such an undertaking may be no easy task: non-sexist texts are hard to come by and changing old habits isn't easy. Its effects may be very superficial, for both the instructor and the students. It is a change, however, that requires no new perspective on either geography or educational methods. Something negative has been removed - just as racist texts and behaviors were removed in response to the Black Civil Rights movement. Educationally, the instructor may be as innovative or as traditional as she or he wishes to be. Geography as a discipline may still be viewed as a certain body of knowledge that the student needs to know.

Changing Course Content

The next step is to add something positive: in this case, the study of women and women's issues. One of the most pervasive forms of sexism among geographers, as among persons in many other fields, is that women and women's issues are ignored. This omission may be corrected in a couple of ways. Traditional course content may be supplemented with information about women - if we study economic trends among a male population, we might study economic trends among a female population as well. Or if we're studying migration patterns, we might study migration patterns of women as well as of men. Another approach is to use data about women exclusively to study geography. Thus we might study the cultural geography of women or the historical geography of women. This response is a

Figure 2

Checklist for Avoiding Sexist Behavior

1. Do you use terms like "chick", "fag", "sissy"? How old must a female be before you refer to her as a woman? A male before you refer to him as a man?
2. Do you use the generic "man"? ("Before a man can get a degree, he must complete college.")
3. Do you expect women to be more verbal and artistic, and men to be more mathematical and scientific?
4. Do you pity women who are unable or unwilling to be pretty and/or fashionable?
5. Do you pity men who are unable or unwilling to be handsome and/or athletic?
6. Do you expect more academically from women than from men? From men than from women?
7. Do you react negatively to women who are assertive? To men who are not?
8. Do you feel it is more important to help men sort out career decisions than it is to help women?
9. Do your lectures and texts include role models and examples relevant to both men and women?
10. In discussions, do you allow males to dominate the discussion? Females?

Checklist for Avoiding Sexism in Curriculum Development and Materials

1. Are teachers provided the information they need to analyze instructional materials for sexist content?
2. Are students encouraged to make critical analysis of instructional materials?
3. Are students and teachers encouraged to bring in materials that portray both men and women in positive and unstereotyped ways?
4. Have you developed supplementary materials that avoid sex stereotypes?
5. Do texts include the contributions of women? (economically, historically, culturally)
6. Do texts portray or refer to women in other than stereotyped roles?
7. Do graphics, pictures and AV materials present men and women in a variety of roles?
8. Are courses in women's studies included in the curriculum?

deeper response to the women's movement because it recognizes the legitimacy of studying women and women's issues. It also requires a greater change on the part of the instructor, since it involves a substantial change in the "content" of geography. This change requires no pedagogic change however. Geography may still be viewed as a body of knowledge, and the instructor's role can remain one of conveying that body of knowledge, by whatever means, to the student. The student's role may remain one of a passive learner of that body of knowledge, although she or he may certainly find it highly motivating to study geography from a viewpoint more relevant to her or his concerns. But the educational emphasis remains on the product (content) rather than on the learning process of the student.

One problem which arises with this type of approach is the dearth of material available about women. Bibliographies such as the one compiled by Bonnie Loyd[1] are most helpful, but their very existence illustrates the fact that geography has been a male-oriented discipline. Although more information about women is becoming available, a "geography of women" is still in the making. We have much to learn about women - are in the process of learning it. And it is the "process" perspective which invites us to look at both geography and the methodology of teaching it from a third viewpoint.

A New Perspective

The "process" of learning, the idea of the Progressive educators that learning to learn and how to think are more important than what

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[1]Loyd, Bonnie, "Women and Geography: An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Sources of Information," Exchange Bibliography #1159, Council of Planning Librarians, November 1976.

we learn and the things we think about, is increasingly becoming the focus of education. The question is, what is the "process" of geography? Or put another way, how can a geography teacher structure a classroom experience so that the student learns "geography" as a problem solving tool that will be of use throughout the person's lifetime?

As we begin to recognize the scope of sexism and the breadth and depth of its influence, we also open up a whole new area of study that has previously been largely neglected. We become engaged in the process of asking ourselves both what it is we want to know and how we might find the answers to our questions. What don't we know about women that a geographical perspective might help us discover? What do we think we know about women that a geographical perspective might shed new light on? What kind of unique contribution can the study of women make to our understanding of all people, and what kinds of tools does geography offer for conducting this sort of inquiry? In other words, how can we use geography to study women? When we begin asking these kinds of questions, geography as a body of knowledge can offer few answers. To approach these questions requires a new definition of geography as a group of methods for analyzing data which emphasizes relative location as a clue to understanding complex human phenomena. Such a definition transforms geography into a tool both for discovering and generating new information about women and for re-examining old information from a new perspective.

When the instructor implements this type of approach to geography - geography as a group of methods for analyzing data - her or his role can no longer remain one of "transmitter of knowledge." Rather, the assumption that must underlie such an approach is that many things may be learned,

and the instructor's job is to create a situation in which students learn how to learn those things. This approach assumes that in order to learn behavior a student must engage in that behavior, and that students must be active participants in the learning process, developing thinking skills and gaining proficiency with learning tools. Once the instructor has introduced the "methods", his or her job is to help students learn to be social scientists by using a geographic perspective to analyze their own social environment. The instructor's role becomes uniquely valuable: as expert consultant (structuring the environment and teaching the research process) and provider of feedback and support. This approach describes in short, a collaborative model in which both instructor and students are engaged in inquiry. Our feeling is that these kinds of behaviors, and the definition of geography as a special kind of inquiry, provides a link between trends in education which emphasize a concern with process and trends in the Women's Movement (and indeed the entire society) which emphasize individual questioning of individual, group, and societal norms.

Attached to this article is an outline of a course in which an attempt was made to implement these ideas (Figure 3). The brainstorming which we have included in our packet of materials is designed to help launch instructors and students on this process of mutual inquiry (Figure 4). As presented here it is designed for use by upper division college students, but similar exercises have been used with high school students in a research class. Its purpose is to help solve one of the most debilitating research problems: finding a topic. Topics of papers in this course included mapping rates of mental illness among women, investigating the relationship

Figure 3

Brainstorming Exercise

Finding a researchable topic is often a difficult problem for graduate students (and others). This is a brainstorming exercise to help you generate some ideas.

Group brainstorming can be considered a two phase technique which emphasizes the gathering of a maximum number of ideas in the first phase and a sifting or ranking in the second.

Rules for brainstorming:

1. Criticism is ruled out.
2. Free-wheeling, speculation, and far out ideas are welcome.
3. Quantity is more important than quality.
4. Combination and improvement are sought.

Problem Statement: to make a list of geographic research topics that can be undertaken about women.

1. Each person in the group will talk for exactly one minute on the topic "Important forces molding the spatial structure of my life."

2. As individuals list the following:

   - one force affecting women more than men._____
   - one distribution important to women._____
   - one complex women's place._____
   - one complex men's place._____
   - one complex shared place._____
   - one pattern that has affected you._____
   - one institution you can influence._____
   - one mappable characteristic of women._____
   - one women's problem which is not directly observable._____
   - one region of particular importance to women._____
   - important communication mechanisms for women._____
   - one attitude you dislike._____ or like_____

3. Each person should now make a list of all the ideas of the group. After that is finished, I'll tell you what to do with the mess.

Figure 3 (cont.)

Brainstorming Exercise, Part 2.

4. Now that you have a list of factors, places, patterns, groups, things and ideas, your job is to turn them into researchable topics. As a group, identify a research topic that can be undertaken that is representative of each of the following types of research:

   - research where you test a hypothesis.

   - research where you compare two patterns.

   - research where you regionalize (and learn something by doing it!).

   - research where you map the distribution of something that is not observable.

   - research where you investigate the spatial interactions of a place.

   - research where you investigate complex causality through a case study.

   - research where you design an experiment to understand something you don't understand now.

   - research where you create a new distribution from which you can make inferences.

5. As homework, refine the topics and suggest a data source for each investigation other than questionnaire or interview data.

Geography 5990
Geographic Perspectives on Women
Michael Libbee

Welcome to "Geographic Perspectives on Women".

My princip goal in this course is to "teach" you to do primary geographic research, but to do that in a context which allows you the maximum amount of freedom to explore topics related to women that interest you.

Course Schedule

Section 1: The "Methods" of Geography

Jan. 17 Introduction, discussion of course format initial brainstorming
Jan. 24 Place Inventory, Ecology, and Comparison
Jan. 31 Distribution Analysis, Pattern Comparison
Feb. 7 Diffusion, Regionalization

During this section of the course I'll be presenting exercises and lectures on methods geographers use to gather and analyze data. There will not be any specific out-of-class assignments, but you should be reading widely on women. A portion of each class will be spent sharing interesting articles or ideas from the readings.

Section 2: The Research Process

Feb. 14 Brainstorm topics
Feb. 21 Proposals due, discuss in class (we may have to reschedule this class)
Feb. 28 Rough data due, talk about data problems
Mar. 7 What is data analysis?
Mar. 14 Rough draft due

During this section of the course the class activity will correspond directly with the development of your research paper. This will probably be the high workload period in the course.

Section 3: Student Presentations

Mar. 21 Spring Break, no classes
Mar. 28 Rough Drafts returned with comments, student option
Apr. 4 Student option
Apr. 11 Student option
Apr. 18 Student option, final copy of research paper due
Apr. 25 No class (I'll be at a convention)
May 2 Individual meetings for grades during the day, course evaluation in class. Bibliography for readings due.

This section of the course can be designed as seems appropriate.

Grading System

For a "B" you need to 1) read widely on women (an annotated bibliography of at least 1,000 pages), 2) participate actively in class (including leading discussions and contributing short reports on items you've read that might be of interest to the group), and 3) do an acceptable research paper. "A's" will be awarded for exceptional work on the research paper.

between ADC and child care in Oklahoma, investigating the relationship between editorial support of the ERA and state passage of the amendment and change in the number of women in state legislature. The methods of geography are defined as methods of looking at places (inventorying characteristics, studying the ecology of places, and comparing places), and methods of analyzing mapped data (explaining distributions, comparing patterns, analyzing diffusion patterns, and regionalizing). The requirements for the paper were that the students had to use primary mapped data and begin to analyze the data. Brief exercises were presented in class as an introduction to these methods.

But to truly acquire and internalize these methods, and the thought processes associated with them, people must engage in the behaviors. The second portion of the course involves using class time as a context to provide feedback to students "muddling through" the research process. Since the intent of this course is to have students learn through experimentation, mistakes are commonplace and extensive; constructive, non-judgemental feedback and the chance to redo the paper are critical. We are in fact convinced that providing extensive feedback is the most important job of the instructor, and that rewriting the research paper is a learning experience of major significance. When students complete this course, they don't have a common "body of knowledge", for their research papers have been on different topics and used different methodogies. Neither have they read common materials for their reading was directed by their interests, not the instructor's. What they have done is to participate in a research process attempting to make meaning out of their social environment through the use of a geographic perspective.

In conclusion, we see a clear link between changes in our society as reflected by the Women's Movement, and ideas about education. We're convinced that it is critical for geographers to attempt to link these ideas in their teaching, and we've presented the attempts we've made in our own classrooms.